



General Consultation Questions

- What programs are currently delivered by your organisation to address digital exclusion? Are they targeted or general programs?
 - Monthly volunteer-based technology help with one-to-one appointments. General program—any user is accepted.
 - Computer access and staff assistance if required. General program—any user is accepted.

- What lessons can be learned from these programs to support the development of new programs?
 - The one-to-one assistance is not a specifically funded program. If it was, it can be expanded as the need is there.
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- Should digital inclusion programs be targeted to specific cohorts or general?
 - A combination of both targeted and general strategies. For instance, general programs can set a foundation for widespread digital literacy, while targeted initiatives can address specific barriers faced by vulnerable or marginalized groups.
- What are the risks of creating general programs that are not targeted to specific cohorts?
 - Inequality reinforcement; overlooking specific needs; not culturally relevant. A general program may not sufficiently address accessibility considerations. A one-size-fits-all approach might not address any unique needs of those living in remote or underserved regions.
- If local solutions are a key to successful digital inclusion programs, how can communities be empowered and supported to develop and run digital inclusion programs?
 - Community ownership is important. An initial needs assessment would be necessary to understand any specific challenges, demographics and existing digital skills. Work with any existing local organisations who have existing networks and usually a high degree of understanding of a community's needs. Gather input from community members for the design of digital inclusion programs. Empower individuals to become trainers and advocates for digital literacy. Look at digital infrastructure improvements. Use local leaders, educators and influencers to take the lead in promoting digital inclusion. Use peer-to-peer learning. Provide funding, training and capacity building opportunities.
- What partnerships are required to deliver digital inclusion support?
 - NFP organisations, community groups, educational institutions, businesses and corporations, local councils, telecommunications companies (ISPs), technology companies, health-care providers, Services Australia, workforce
- What are the key priorities that require addressing to improve digital inclusion?
 - Cross-sector collaboration—don't repeat what's already done—share knowledge—create partnerships. Educate users on online privacy and security. Implement measures to protect user's data and ensure a safe online environment—don't let tech companies dictate this. Encourage the development of accessible, diverse, inclusive content.



ACCESS General questions

- What more can be done to improve access to devices in Queensland?
 - Government consider a partnership with big tech companies and businesses (both small and large) to create a recycling scheme by which old devices, computers and associated items can be housed in one place (and ensure they are stripped of data, fully functioning and fit-for-purpose) and then via some sort of application process (eg along the lines of GIVIT) individuals or groups (eg neighbourhood centres) can apply for items in response to unmet needs of vulnerable and/or low income families/persons. The number of these items that must end in landfill is probably staggering. While programs like MobileMuster is used to recycle mobile phones, chargers and accessories, a program as outlined above, offers the chance of reusing for a purpose rather than destroying.

- What more can be done to improve access to the internet in Queensland?
 - Actually make real universal and affordable access to the internet. There are still areas of the Granite Belt in Qld where GBNC operates that do not have internet coverage, let alone consistent or high-speed access to the internet in all locations. Surely this is a federal government issue, and the role of the State is to keep raising the problem that there is no universal internet access or coverage throughout Australia.
 - Provide funding for professional development to allow community organisations to up-date accessibility to their digital systems, products etc so that they are user-friendly to all people equally. There are a lot of community organisations out there that don't know how to do this or do not even recognise that they may need to.
 - To improve connectivity literacy, broadly:
 - 1) Collaborate with Internet Service Providers to ensure that accurate and up-to-date information about internet plans, modems and related tools. Encourage ISPs to simplify their communication materials and make them more accessible to users of varying technical expertise.
 - 2) Conduct an educational campaign that focuses on connectivity literacy. Include what resources are currently available and increase awareness of affordable communication products. Organizations such as ACCAN and associated sites (eg The Regional Tech Hub) need to be promoted more.
A particular focus for state governments would be how to navigate their online portal sites.
 - 3) Provide on-going funding to community organizations for 1:1 support to assist individuals.
 - 4) Assist in the creation of a similar organization that mirrors the functions and services of the Good Things Foundation: National Digital Inclusion Network in the UK (<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/network/about/>).

Questions for community organisations

- Do the Queenslanders you support have access to the right number and types of devices?
 - NO, not everyone in the Granite Belt Qld, or every one of our clients. Likewise it is also not uniform in which specific devices or numbers of devices each person needs; assuming access to the internet is present.



What is needed at any point in time is somewhat dependant on what the person needs to be able to do with that device in that stage of their lifespan. For example, a computer/laptop is a more appropriate device for high school student than an iPad. Further, the number of devices issue would naturally be impacted by the numbers of people in any family unit. Even if one device was enough when children are toddlers, as they age that one device will not be sufficient as they age into adulthood and the life demands/tasks change and multiply.

- What does this mean for them?
 - Digital inequity of access for rural persons potentially impacts all aspects of their lives – health, social connectedness, social isolation education, work, getting help, given so much more service delivery of many types is based on-line etc. Digital inequality of access based initially on where they live, given there is not complete availability of the internet now. This inequality then limits the person/s life choices and can greatly shape their socio-economic situation; then if they become a parent this inequality if unaddressed has the potential to set up 2nd generational poverty or life-limiting choices.
 - Insecure housing and homelessness also mean that options for internet access are limited. This has always been a problem but is an increasing one in the current economic climate. It also means that options for data access are often limited to mobile solutions only.
 - Technology is important to education. Low-income families with school-age children suffer this inequity disproportionately via lack of access to devices and data. They are being left behind through no fault of their own.

AFFORDABILITY General questions

- What more can be done to improve affordability of connecting to and using the internet in Queensland?
 - Assuming it is possible to access internet in all geographic locations (eg via satellite), provide some sort of subsidy to those people resident in areas where they don't have the option of the cheapest form of internet access. Surely the telcos know the geographic locations where the dearer forms of internet are, or where the service is inconsistent (eg only has highest speed at 1am in the morning) so such subsidies can be applied in a more targeted manner.
 - While libraries and community centres often provide free Wi-Fi to assist with accessing the internet, this will often involve driving to a major city centre to access this option. This exacerbates problems associated with the tyranny of distance; and for young people who cannot drive, further disadvantage occurs. The Granite Belt (regional, rural Qld) has 26 towns/villages and zero public transport. The State Government should support Local Councils with the installation of more free public Wi-Fi access into local townships and villages to increase the reach of accessing the internet in a more equitable way.
 - If internet access is being considered a fundamental human right (which makes sense), then Qld should continue to prioritise and advocate for the addition of an internet/phone allowance to be administered by Services Australia. This is a no-brainer.



- Assist in the creation of a similar organization that mirrors the functions and services of the Good Things Foundation: National Digital Inclusion Network in the UK (<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/network/about/>).

Questions for community organisations

- How does affordability impact the Queenslanders you support?
 - As a neighbourhood centre the majority of our clients are on fixed incomes and on the lowest socio-economic scale. Their double disadvantage is then living in a rural community where in some parts of our geography there is no internet access at all. For people in these situations, affordability is a major issue. They are making their limited financial means cover an ever-increasing number of things/items, which themselves are individually often increasing in price. For example, clients will prioritise a monthly payment to an ISP above other expenses in order to remain connected. It is an essential service and a lifeline.
- How can affordability programs be designed to maximise participation and reduce barriers to identifying participants?
 - Schools should be able to provide technology to identified students who need it. Governments should develop policies/programs to do this and make sure that any program is consistent across all schools. Invest in student education so that no child misses out.

Work with telecommunication companies to reassess their affordability programs. Do they really offer a competitive and a really affordable product that is useful? Telstra's mobile for discount for eligible concession holders is currently \$19 off a \$50 product (Mobile Starter Plan) with only 2GB of data. You are restricted to the plan; excess data is capped at 1.5 Mbps; and you are unable to add any repayment options to the service including device, accessory or hardware repayment options. This is not a good plan for most users. This is data poverty.



Digital Ability General questions

- What more can be done to improve the digital ability of Queenslanders?
 - Provide funding to public libraries, neighbourhood centres, job employment services etc so they can hold small group sessions on how to use each device. Small group sessions are suggested as they might be an informal way for people to meet others in their community and through these sessions potentially create their own informal support network useful post-sessions.
For example, GBNC together with Rotary offers an 'Aging Well' morning tea get-together with a guest speaker each month. At a recent session, the guest speaker spoke on cybercrime/scams and how to avoid them. This was one of the best attended sessions of the year and the questions kept on coming.
 - Separate to the above point, also fund such locations for free troubleshooting on devices which should be provided on a 1 to 1 basis due to privacy of personal information that is required. For example, GBNC once per month has a day when appointments can be made with an IT volunteer person who helps them sort out any problem they are having with any device.
 - In addition, ensure that those funded organisations have the actual capacity to deliver just-in-time support to access appropriate technology/services. Capacity includes both infrastructure, hardware and personal. GBNC has just one public-use computer and one administration staff member to assist whilst also attending to other duties.
 - Ensure that educational policy at schools includes formal digital use training.
 - Assist in the creation of a similar organization that mirrors the functions and services of the Good Things Foundation: National Digital Inclusion Network in the UK (<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/network/about/>).

Questions for community organisations

- How does digital ability impact the Queenslanders you support?
 - It's as obvious as the moon. Yes. It's one of the determinants of digital access. A person can have highspeed consistent internet access, all the most modern devices but have no idea or very limited knowledge of how to use each item to maximum benefit OR troubleshoot some basic errors/problems that arise.
 - Where someone has NO idea how to use a device, the impact is the same as above – inequity and inequality. IF they have a very basic ability then the impact is the possibility of that individual having a limited access to information, services etc.
- What is required to be able to measure time spent providing digital triage and mitigate the risks to staff in providing this support?
 - As part of any funding program make this sort of measurement a contractual obligation to measure as an output

Digital resilience General questions

- How can digital resilience inform the development of digital ability programs?
 - From our experience, the trust aspect is vital. In our experience of providing a monthly volunteer-based technology help one-to-one appointments, the user has to trust our person and they have to work together to sort out how best to impart information for the user to remember and or develop skills/practice.



Equally, once this service becomes known and trusted then our experience is we often see the person coming back with another device or an upgraded device and want to learn more functionalities.

The key to achieving digital resilience is to provide funding on a long-term basis, not the time-limited basis that has been offered in the past. In rural communities, knowing such a service/support is there and has been there for some time – its much more comforting and less stressful for the person when they need help.

- What other organisations, agencies, or businesses should be involved in developing and delivering digital inclusion support?
 - Any digital/technology business in every community should at least know where to refer people to in their community who can provide lessons and/or help with affording devices and/or learning basic troubleshooting skills.
 - Assistance in the creation of a similar organization that mirrors the functions and services of the Good Things Foundation: National Digital Inclusion Network in the UK. With this network 'you can find free digital inclusion support from members based in libraries, housing associations, community centres, support groups, local authorities, NHS branches, CICs, food banks and training providers. Even more unconventional places like fish & chip shops, pubs, fire stations, barns, and mobile buses!' (<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/network/about/>).
 - Support for a community directory that assists community organizations and members to find appropriate help would be beneficial. This also helps to ensure that those organizations that offering digital inclusion programs are not working in isolation and are instead working in co-ordination with others within the community.

- Is there a need for an awareness campaign to help individuals, households and communities to understand the benefits they can get from being online? Would this help address issues associated with a lack of motivation or trust?
 - Doubt it would help. Why conduct an awareness campaign in communities where there it's known internet access is problematic or non-existent. Without this basic, all the campaign will do is serve to reinforce/further inform individuals of what more they are missing out on due to where they live. Akin to rubbing salt into an open wound. People know already that it is necessary to be online. They have more or an issue with the fact that they can't get online (access/affordability). Any trust or motivation issues are better addressed through the confidence the user has with the person delivering that message or that assistance through one-to-one or small groups interactions.

Questions for community organisations

- How do issues such as motivation or trust impact digital inclusion for the Queenslanders you support?
 - Greatly. In the experience of our volunteer-based monthly IT support activity the person must have great trust because our volunteer, due to the nature of the assistance required, gets access to all manner of personal information (eg names, email addresses, passwords, birth dates etc) which could be used for nefarious purposes such as identity theft.